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Letter dated 9 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit a statement issued today, 9 June, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea on the continuing human rights violations committed by the Tigray People's Liberation Front regime in Addis Ababa. The silence of the international community has given the Ethiopian Government a free hand to inflict suffering on the civilian population of my country. Although Ethiopian crimes against the Eritrean people are evident and have been witnessed by independent bodies, the international community has hitherto taken no action to stop these crimes. My Government reiterates its appeal to the international community to say "enough is enough" and come to the assistance of the suffering population.

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly under agenda items 116 (a) and (d), and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile **Menkerios**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

00-47467 (E) 150600

Annex to the letter dated 9 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea on the crimes against humanity being committed by the inhumane Government in Ethiopia

After 30 years of struggle and hardship, the acts of violence and savagery being committed against the people of Eritrea have not ceased. From the onset of this brutal war, the oppressive and inhumane Government in Ethiopia has taken on the extreme mission to not only destroy the State of Eritrea but also to inflict the most incomprehensible suffering on its people possible. It has shown without any remorse or moral discernment that its desire is to reign as the bearer of anguish and despair against fellow members of humanity.

Without consideration for its own people, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) Government in Ethiopia continues to wage a war that has gained nothing but the unnecessary bloodshed and suffering of its own people. Despite its heavy and unacceptable cost, the Government chooses to send waves of its soldiers into conditions of war that are treacherous and surely to result in massacres. The loss of human lives has become an exploitable tactic of the war-hungry regime in Ethiopia that it does not shy away from using or admitting.

A chronicle of human rights abuses perpetrated by the Government of Ethiopia

1. The very first actions carried out by the Government of Ethiopia once it declared war against Eritrea were to inflict as much suffering and disrupt as many lives as possible, not only on the people of Eritrea but also on the people of Ethiopia. More than 70,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin living throughout Ethiopia have been sequestered, stripped of their belongings and left destitute near the border to venture across mine-filled battle zones to fend for themselves. These 70,000 people have been subjected to the most extreme forms of human rights violations. Their lives have been maliciously struck with as much inhumane treatment as possible, characterized by the forced separation of families, the forced abandonment of children, who will be left unattended and helpless, and the confiscation of approximately $800 million worth of property.

2. Whole Eritrean villages from lower Adiabo in Tigray have been deported from the area. The ruling officials of the region of Tigray, the home of TPLF, have ruthlessly set on fire the cultivated fields and crops that were to be harvested in recent months. Since this expulsion, these Eritreans have had to relocate to temporary sites in lowland Seraye in Eritrea, where they have been living in makeshift tents and under plastic sheets. With the recent invasion of this land by the Ethiopian army, these refugee camps were torn apart by ground and aerial bombardment, forcing the people into dislocation once again. Today there is no Eritrean living in Tigray; this entire province has been ethnically cleansed of Eritreans — an example of Ethiopia's persistent policy of torment and terrorization.

3. Around 1,500 youths claimed as "prisoners of war" have been incarcerated in Ethiopia. These young men have become prisoners of this war without ever engaging in belligerent or combative actions against Ethiopia. On this matter, in

spite of appeals made to many European countries, the United States of America and Canada by the human rights organization, Citizens for Peace in Eritrea, there has been no response by the international community for the release and protection of these innocent victims. The Government of Ethiopia has for the past two years indiscriminately jailed many of these Eritrean youths without any viable cause or evidence except for the fact that they are Eritrean and of military age. In addition to this, there still remain another 2,500 Eritreans missing in Ethiopia, whose whereabouts are unaccounted for.

4. Out of the estimated 130,000 Eritreans who were once living in Ethiopia, roughly only 30,000 remain. They are constantly subjected to harsh forms of discrimination and deprivation, including the denial of their children's right to attend public schools; they have been thrown out of public jobs without any compensation or explanation; and their private business licences have been revoked, impeding their sources of income needed for survival. These people of Eritrea live under a constant threat of violence, and yet for those who have registered with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to be repatriated to Eritrea, they have been refused permission to leave by the Government of Ethiopia.

5. By advocating for hate and bloodshed, Ethiopia's campaign of destruction for more than two years has succeeded in inculcating a culture of violence. This is best manifested in the carnage that the invading Ethiopian army wreaks as it enters and subsequently flees from occupied areas of Eritrea. In the two weeks that the Ethiopian army occupied the town of Barentu, modern hotels, public and private buildings and the bridge connecting the town to neighbouring areas were completely demolished and looted.

6. The recent violence committed against villagers in Molqu, Shambuco and other areas in the western lowlands was particularly vicious and was carried out to deliver deadly harm. By taking away the livestock of the Eritreans and looting their grain, the Ethiopian army deprived these people of their means to live, in turn leaving them for dead.

These accounts represent the massive violations of human rights that are being executed by the Government in Ethiopia. Under the circumstances, Ethiopia's allegations of human rights abuses are not only groundless, but also Ethiopia has no moral authority to accuse Eritrea of any such violations. These actions only further certify another attempt by this unjust Government to divert condemnation of the atrocities that it is committing against humanity — against the peoples of both Eritrea and Ethiopia.

As tensions rise because of the malicious actions being executed by the Ethiopian Government and its army against the people of Eritrea, it is only natural that the patience and tolerance of the Eritrean people at large is being tried. In the interest of their personal security as well as of those who have become internally displaced along with the 1.5 million Eritreans as a result of the war, the Government of Eritrea has sought out the assistance of ICRC in carrying out the voluntary repatriation of Ethiopians.

From 1998 to 1999, in the midst of the war, ICRC completed a round of repatriations of Ethiopian nationals. The State of Eritrea's recent actions fall into line with its previous concerns, with even more reason: the dangers faced today have become increasingly compelling. As such, any measures taken by the Government

of Eritrea concerning the voluntary repatriation of Ethiopian nationals are legally permissible and are not in contravention of international laws. In fact, they are carried out in accordance with a law passed by the Eritrean Parliament in June 1998, which binds the Government to prevent any forms of violence or aggression from being committed against Ethiopians living in Eritrea.

Despite its acceptance of international laws and conventions against the violation of human rights, the Government of Ethiopia proceeds with insolence and zeal to see the suffering of peoples regardless of its commitment to humanity and its accountability to the international community. Such actions constitute a blatant act of contempt and irreverence for the laws that govern our free world, the same laws that are meant to ensure the protection and respect of the sanctity of human rights in the face of war and political, economic or military ambition.

It is a fallacy and an injustice to the peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia, as well as to the international community, for the Government of Ethiopia to claim that it speaks and acts on behalf of the interests of its people. This corrupt and oppressive Government must be held accountable and brought to terms with the crimes against humanity that it continues to commit.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Asmara
9 June 2000